

## The Sunday School

### LESSON FOR JULY 31

BY THE EDITOR

Naboth's Vineyard.—1 Kings 21: 4-16

GOLDEN TEXT.—Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house. Ex. 20: 17.

LESSON THOUGHT.—Covetousness cherished may lead to the worst crimes.

#### Home Readings

Naboth's Vineyard. 1 Kings 21, 1-16.  
Law of inheritance. Lev. 25: 18-28.  
Vanity of wealth. Eccles. 2: 1-11.  
Oppression condemned. Micah 2: 1-10.  
Covetous Achan. Josh. 7: 10-13; 19: 26.  
Sin of covetousness. Luke 12: 13-21.

#### Introductory Notes

This lesson is full of very practical instruction. The events occurred in the latter part of Ahab's reign, three or four years before his death. Persecution had now ceased in the kingdom and the work of reform was gradually going on. The power of God's prophets, Elijah and Elisha was being felt. The case of Ahab, however, was a hopeless one, his utterly depraved character made a reformation next to impossible, and his final doom is already pending.

#### Meaning of the Text

Verse 4. Ahab came from Jezreel into his house at Samaria. He had been at Jezreel looking after his palace grounds there. It was the king's summer resort which he wanted to improve by the addition of Naboth's vineyard. He was angry and sullen, and acted like a petted, spoiled child.

V. 5. Ahab was like wax in her hands, she could do with him as she pleased. She came to comfort him or to arouse him from the despondent mood in which she found him.

V. 6. This is the reason why Ahab pouted, and he was frank to tell his wife. He failed, however, to tell her why Naboth would not sell his vineyard. It was his father's inheritance, and its sale was forbidden by law. Lev. 25: 23-28; Num. 36: 7. Besides he had perfect right to retain his home with all its sacred associations.

V. 7. These words contain a stinging taunt. The idea of letting the refusal of one of the king's subjects stand in the way of his desire. Who is "boss" here, the king or his subjects? If you are too weak or scrupled to get what you want, I, the weak woman will get it for you.

V. 8. She took matters in her own hand and had letters written by the loyal scribes. The affixing of the king's seal gave the letters authority. By allowing the use of the seal, the king became responsible for what she wrote. The elders and nobles constituted the tribunal of justice in Jezreel, having the power of life and death.

V. 9. The course was outlined in the sealed letters, and the judges were but tools to carry out her wicked conspiracy. To proclaim a fast would imply that a great wrong had been committed against God for which there must be humiliation and contrition.

V. 10. The law required that every crime be proved by witnesses. Deut. 17: 6. "Belial" here simply means worthlessness, wrecklessness; they were base fellows who would swear to anything.

V. 11. They carried out her instructions to the letter, showing how corrupt the times had become, for this took place in Naboth's own city where everybody knew the life he had lived. He was a good man, righteous, guilty of no crime.

V. 12. They would honor him until the testimony was given against him. This adds to the crime.

V. 13. His sons were also put to death (2 Kings 9: 25, 26,) leaving no heirs the property would revert to the crown.

V. 14. It was a very easy way to dispose of the matter but this did not end the matter.

Vs. 15, 16. Ahab was pleased when he heard of the death of Naboth and went at once to take possession, but read what follows and find how much pleasure he out got of it.

#### The Lesson Applied

*The sin of covetousness.*—When one gives place to the sin of covetousness his peace and happiness are gone. Ahab coveted Naboth's vineyard and because he could not secure that little garden all his happiness was marred. This is the way of that terrible sin of covetousness. It is one of the most dangerous of all sins, because people do not always know when they are guilty of this sin. Before they are aware of it, it has done its deadly work, eaten into the very heart of the soul and destroyed its vitality. The trouble is too many covetous people mistake their covetousness for what they call necessary economy. The community looks upon them as respectable people. The enormity of this sin is not realized. With God it is idolatry, and the covetous man is classed with the thief and liar and murderer. To say the least the covetous man finds himself in every bad company if he is where the Bible puts him.

2. *Moral Courage.*—One of the great needs of the day is that kind of moral courage which enabled Naboth to refuse to sell his vineyard to the king. It is true he suffered death for it, but it is far better that one should die doing right, than live doing wrong. It was a religious duty to keep his vineyard and even the king can not compel him to violate this law of God written in his heart. It is the kind of courage that is needed today. Our boys and young men need the moral courage to say no to all manner of temptation, to say, "Yes, I am afraid to dishonor my mother or to despise my Bible. I am afraid to take the first drink, afraid to chew, afraid to do wrong." The real hero is the man who is afraid to do wrong and not afraid to do right. The real coward is the man who is afraid to do right under all circumstances.

3. *Evil Associations.*—Ahab was a bad man but he became a great deal worse by being associated with Jezebel his wife. That was an unholy alliance. We should beware

of evil associations and bad friendship. It makes the bad worse and the good bad. A good wife is a blessing to a man, but a bad woman is the devil's agent to drag men down to perdition.

4. *Successful Sin.*—There is such a thing as succeeding in sin but it is dear success. It brings with it a terrible curse. Ahab got the vineyard, got it for nothing, yet not for nothing, for it was in the end an expensive luxury. Falsehood, bribery, perjury, lying, accusations, murder, these are the sins that led to the king's possessions, and he who gets possessions in this way will not enjoy them. One had far better remain poor all his life than secure great riches, luxury at such a price as this. Follow Ahab as he goes down to take possession of his ill-gotten gain, and then "beware of covetousness which is idolatry."

#### To Make You Think

1. Who was king of Israel at this time?
2. Was he a poor man?
3. What can you say as to the way he lived?
4. Was he a happy man?
5. What made him unhappy?
6. If he had got Naboth's vineyard do you think he would have been a happy man?
7. Are such men as he was ever happy?
8. What was the root of his trouble?
9. What is covetousness?
10. Is covetousness a real sin?
11. Why is it peculiarly dangerous?
12. Who are the happiest people in this world?
13. Why was Naboth happier than Ahab?
14. Did not Ahab make Naboth a fair offer?
15. Wherein then did he sin?
16. Who proposed to get the vineyard for Ahab?
17. Who showed greatest weakness here, Ahab or Jezebel?
18. Are we guilty of the sins we wish others to do for us when we dare not do them ourselves?
19. How did Ahab become guilty of Jezebel's crime?
20. Why did not Naboth want to sell the vineyard?
21. Do you think he had better left Ahab have it and lived, than do as he did?
22. Do we have possessions that we must not barter away?
23. How many crimes are enumerated in this lesson?
24. How many of the Commandments were broken in obtaining possession of Naboth's vineyard?
25. Did Ahab enjoy the vineyard after he had it?
26. Why not?

#### Lesson Points

1. No amount of possessions will ever satisfy the covetous man.
2. Covetousness leads into all kinds of ugliness and sin.
3. A good wife is a great blessing, but the man who marries a bad woman is selling his soul to the devil.
4. We do not escape the guilt of sin by letting some one else do wicked things while we keep still.
5. A successful sin is a terrible success, for it brings a curse with it.
5. Possessions that come to us thro crime and wrong doing are no blessing to us.
7. The guilty can not get away from their sin, it follows them, it finds them out, and sooner or later the sinner must say with the king, "Hast thou found me?"
8. Take heed and beware of covetousness which is idolatry.